

Summary of January 28th Meeting of the Saranac Lake Police Review Committee

The meeting was held via zoom from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Present were: John Sweeney, Chief James Joyce, Melinda Little, Ernest Hough, Sarah Clarkin, Asst. Suzanne Lavigne, Betsy Fuller, Angela Brice, DA David Hayes. Absent: Chris Morris.

Review of Policy 343

Community Relations Policy will be modified to the Village Board adopted proposed community relation policy, the Village Adopted policy will prevail. Reference Policy 343 and 343.10

Saranac Lake Citizen Police Interface Committee

A question of FOIL was raised in reference to listening committees going forward.

If minutes or recordings of the meetings are compiled they will be subject to FOIL requests..

Trustee Little asked if a Village Board Member should be on the Interface Committee.

Chief Joyce policy review of the Committee Liaison Position

This position and interactions will be shared throughout the Police Department.

Community Relations Coordinator will be a twofold effort.

1. Department outreach
2. Liaison to the Interface Committee

Proposed additional Groups for interaction

1. High School
2. Colleges
3. Youth Center
4. Samaritan House
5. PAL (Police Athletic League)
6. Teen Monitoring
7. YMCA
8. DARE Program

Many suggestions from survey and outreach meetings requested more foot patrols for exposure. Due to staff availability most foot patrols are completed at night.

The Chief will attempt to designate more time for Interface Committee with multiple staff.

Trustee Little update on Draft Report & Recommendations

Draft will include but not limited to:

1. Summary of Listening Sessions
2. PD Polices reviewed
3. Listing of groups for the Interface Committee
4. Additional training opportunities
5. CALEP summary
6. Status Update on EO-203 Committee progress
7. Communication Process
8. Review of the EO-203 items
9. Website update

Listening Group Follow up

Police Chief and Angela Brice to organize second meeting with College Listening Groups

Review of Homeless Policy

Police Chief and Ernest Hough to review homeless policy and update accordingly

Future Website updates

These will be developed and incorporated via Village Staff

EO203 Committee agreed to postpone next Public Comment date and will decide at next meeting time and date

Message Board

Can NYSDOT provide message board to post meeting time/date for next Public Session? Currently all message boards are being utilized for NYS Covid vaccination centers.

Draft Outline for Saranac Lake Citizen Police Interface Committee

Purpose: To provide a vehicle for building a bridge between the SLPD and the citizens in our community that will enable ongoing constructive communication, enhance public safety and embrace and support a respect for the diversity of our residents and visitors.

Membership: Seven volunteer members to be appointed by the Village Board of Trustees. Interested parties will be asked to submit letters of interest. Every effort will be made to form as diverse a group as possible with representation from organizations such as the SL Youth Group, NCCC, Paul Smiths College, the Adirondack North Country Gender Alliance, residents of the Harrietstown Housing Authority, St. Joseph's, etc.

Terms:

- Two years with staggered terms to ensure continuity.
- Members can serve no more than two terms consecutively.

Liaisons: The committee will liaison with the SLPD Community Relations Coordinator, the Chief of Police and the Village Manager and attend Committee Meetings when invited by the Committee Facilitator.

Anticipated Activities:

- Holding periodic listening sessions with groups who feel uncomfortable with attending public meetings to flag any issues regarding police and citizen interactions and to gather suggestions for strengthening police and citizen relations.
- Hold regular meetings with the SLPD liaisons to discuss non-HR related complaints, compliments and issues and form strategies for strengthening the police/citizen relations.
- Advising the SLPD and assisting with other forms of outreach such as:
 - Bike rodeos & helmet safety sessions
 - DARE sessions
- Working with the SLPD and the Village of Saranac Lake on improving the SLPD section of the Village website.
- And other activities to be determined by the Committee.

Meetings: To be held once a month, with the option of calling additional meetings as needed. Members will be asked to resign if they miss 3 consecutive meetings without a compelling reason for the absence. Time, day etc. to be decided once the committee has been formed.

The Meetings will be posted and conducted in accordance with New York's open meeting laws.

Resignation: The Village Board is responsible for filling vacancies.

Location of Meetings: If possible, a neutral location will be identified to host the meetings – perhaps the Cantwell Room at the Saranac Lake Library.

Agenda

- Content for each meeting will be recommended by committee members.
- Format to Include:
 - Call to Order

- Agenda Review
- Approval of Minutes
- Committee Reports
- Complaints/Compliments
- New Business
- Old Business
- Public Comments with time limits
- Adjourn
- Quorum: 4 members
- Decisions:
 - Made by simple majority of those present
- Minutes:
 - Once approved, minutes will be emailed to the Village Manager to be posted on the Village Website.

Committee Member Meeting Roles

- Facilitator position will rotate quarterly, or as agreed by consensus vote.
- Roles and Responsibilities
 - Meeting Facilitator
 - Conducts Meetings
 - Organizes agenda items
- Note-taker
 - Records meeting minutes
 - Sends approved minutes to Village Manager
- Monitoring Communications
 - Check with SLPD Liaisons regarding activities and issues during the month

Community Relations

343.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for community relationship-building.

Additional guidance on community relations and outreach is provided in other policies, including the:

- Hate Crimes Policy.
- Limited English Proficiency Services Policy.
- Communications with Persons with Disabilities Policy.
- Chaplains Policy.
- Patrol Policy.
- Suspicious Activity Reporting Policy.

343.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Saranac Lake Village Police Department to promote positive relationships between department members and the community by treating community members with dignity and respect and engaging them in public safety strategy development and relationship-building activities, and by making relevant policy and operations information available to the community in a transparent manner.

343.3 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers should, as time and circumstances reasonably permit:

- (a) Make casual and consensual contacts with community members to promote positive community relationships (see the Contacts and Temporary Detentions Policy).
- (b) Become reasonably familiar with the schools, businesses and community groups in their assigned jurisdictional areas.
- (c) Work with community members and the department community relations coordinator to identify issues and solve problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (d) Conduct periodic foot patrols of their assigned areas to facilitate interaction with community members. Officers carrying out foot patrols should notify an appropriate supervisor and Dispatch of their status (i.e., on foot patrol) and location before beginning and upon completion of the foot patrol.

343.4 COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should designate a member of the Department to serve as the community relations coordinator. He/she should report directly to the Chief of Police or authorized designee and is responsible for:

- (a) Obtaining department-approved training related to his/her responsibilities.

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- (b) Responding to requests from department members and the community for assistance in identifying issues and solving problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (c) Organizing surveys to measure the condition of the department's relationship with the community.
- (d) Working with community groups, department members and other community resources to:
 - 1. Identify and solve public safety problems within the community.
 - 2. Organize programs and activities that help build positive relationships between department members and the community and provide community members with an improved understanding of department operations.
- (e) Working with Patrol Supervisors to develop patrol deployment plans that allow officers the time to participate in community engagement and problem-solving activities.
- (f) Recognizing department and community members for exceptional work or performance in community relations efforts.
- (g) Attending Village Board and other community meetings on an as needed basis to obtain information on community relations needs.
- (h) Assisting with the department's response to events that may affect community relations, such as an incident where the conduct of a department member is called into public question.
- (i) Informing the Chief of Police and others of developments and needs related to the furtherance of the department's community relations goals, as appropriate.

343.5 SURVEYS

The community relations coordinator may arrange for a survey of community members and department members to be conducted on a basis as determined by the Administration to assess the condition of the relationship between the Department and the community. Survey questions should be designed to evaluate perceptions of the following:

- (a) Overall performance of the Department
- (b) Overall competence of department members
- (c) Attitude and behavior of department members
- (d) Level of community trust in the Department
- (e) Safety, security or other concerns

A written summary of the compiled results of the survey should be provided to the Chief of Police.

343.6 COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

The community relations coordinator should organize or assist with programs and activities that create opportunities for department members and community members, especially youth, to interact in a positive setting. Examples of such programs and events include:

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- (a) Department-sponsored athletic programs (e.g., baseball, basketball, soccer, bowling).
- (b) Police-community get-togethers (e.g., cookouts, meals, charity events).
- (c) Youth leadership and life skills mentoring.
- (d) School resource officer/Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.®) programs.
- (e) Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention programs.

343.7 INFORMATION SHARING

The community relations coordinator should work with Supervisors to develop methods and procedures for the convenient sharing of information (e.g., major incident notifications, significant changes in department operations, comments, feedback, positive events) between the Department and community members. Examples of information-sharing methods include:

- (a) Community meetings.
- (b) Social media (see the Department Use of Social Media Policy).
- (c) Department website postings.

Information should be regularly refreshed, to inform and engage community members continuously.

343.8 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS EDUCATION

The community relations coordinator should develop methods to educate community members on general law enforcement operations so they may understand the work that officers do to keep the community safe. Examples of educational methods include:

- (a) Development and distribution of informational cards/flyers.
- (b) Department website postings.
- (c) Presentations to driver education classes.
- (d) Instruction in schools.
- (e) Department ride-alongs (see the Ride-Alongs Policy).
- (f) Scenario/Simulation exercises with community member participation.
- (g) Youth internships at the Department.

Instructional information should include direction on how community members should interact with the police during enforcement or investigative contacts and how community members can make a complaint to the Department regarding alleged misconduct or inappropriate job performance by department members.

343.9 SAFETY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Department members responsible for community relations activities should consider the safety of the community participants and, as much as reasonably practicable, should not allow them to be present in any location or situation that would jeopardize their safety.

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Department members in charge of community relations events should ensure that participating community members have completed waiver forms before participation, if appropriate. A parent or guardian must complete the waiver form if the participating community member has not reached 18 years of age.

343.10 COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Chief of Police, in conjunction with the Village Board, should establish a committee of volunteers consisting of community members, community leaders and other community stakeholders (e.g., representatives from schools, churches, businesses, social service organizations). The makeup of the committee should reflect the demographics of the community as much as practicable.

The committee should convene regularly to:

- (a) Provide a public forum for gathering information about public safety concerns in the community.
- (b) Work with the Department to develop strategies to solve public safety problems.
- (c) Generate plans for improving the relationship between the Department and the community.
- (d) Participate in community outreach to solicit input from community members, including youth from the community.

The Community Relations Coordinator or other authorized designee should arrange for initial and ongoing training for committee members on topics relevant to their responsibilities if applicable.

The Chief of Police may include the committee in the evaluation and development of department policies and procedures and may ask them to review certain personnel complaints for the purpose of providing recommendations regarding supervisory, training or other issues as appropriate.

343.10.1 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Chief of Police and the community relations coordinator should work with the Village Attorney as appropriate to ensure the committee complies with any legal requirements such as public notices, records maintenance and any other associated obligations or procedures.

343.11 TRANSPARENCY

The Department should periodically publish statistical data and analysis regarding the department's operations. The reports should not contain the names of officer, suspects or case numbers. The community relations coordinator should work with the community advisory committee to identify information that may increase transparency regarding department operations.

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343.12 TRAINING

Subject to available resources, members should receive training related to this policy, including training on topics such as:

- (a) Effective social interaction and communication skills.
- (b) Cultural, racial and ethnic diversity and relations.
- (c) Building community partnerships.
- (d) Community policing and problem-solving principles.
- (e) Enforcement actions and their effects on community relations.

Where practicable and appropriate, community members, especially those with relevant expertise, should be involved in the training to provide input from a community perspective.

Homeless Persons

427.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that department members understand the needs and rights of the homeless, and to establish procedures to guide them during all contacts with the homeless, whether consensual or for enforcement purposes.

This policy establishes a liaison to the homeless community, addresses the responsibilities of the department member appointed to act as a liaison to the homeless, and details the need for special protection and services for homeless persons.

427.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Saranac Lake Village Police Department to protect the rights, dignity and private property of all members of the community, including people who are homeless. Abuse of authority to harass any member of the community will not be permitted. The Saranac Lake Village Police Department will address the needs of homeless persons in balance with the overall mission of this department.

Homelessness is not a crime and members will not use homelessness as the sole basis for detention or law enforcement action.

427.3 LIAISON TO THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY

The Chief of Police shall delegate certain responsibilities to a liaison to the homeless community. The liaison shall be appointed by and directly responsible to the Patrol Supervisor or the authorized designee.

The responsibilities of the liaison include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Maintaining and making available to all department members a list of assistance programs and other resources that are available to homeless persons.
- (b) Meeting with social services and representatives of other organizations that render assistance to the homeless community.
- (c) Maintaining a list of the areas within and near the jurisdiction of this department that are used as frequent homeless encampments.
- (d) Remaining abreast of laws dealing with homelessness, including personal property rights.
- (e) Being present during any clean-up operation conducted by this department that involves the removal of personal property of the homeless. This is to ensure that the established rights of the homeless are not violated.
- (f) Developing training to assist members in understanding current legal and social issues relating to the homeless.

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427.4 FIELD CONTACTS

Officers are encouraged to contact a homeless person to render aid, offer assistance or to check on the person's welfare. Officers also will take enforcement action when information supports a reasonable and articulable suspicion of criminal activity. However, such contacts shall not be used for harassment.

When encountering a homeless person who has committed a nonviolent minor offense and continued freedom is not likely to result in a continuation of the offense or a breach of the peace, officers are encouraged to consider long-term solutions, such as shelter referrals and counseling, in lieu of an arrest and criminal charges.

Officers should provide homeless persons with resources and assistance information whenever it is reasonably apparent that such services may be appropriate.

427.4.1 CONSIDERATIONS

A homeless person will receive the same level and quality of service provided to other members of the community. The fact that a victim, witness or suspect is homeless can, however, require special consideration for a successful investigation and prosecution. When handling investigations involving victims, witnesses or suspects who are homeless, officers should consider:

- (a) Documenting alternate contact information. This may include obtaining addresses and telephone numbers of relatives and friends.
- (b) Documenting locations the person may frequent.
- (c) Providing victim/witness resources, when appropriate.
- (d) Obtaining sufficient statements from all available witnesses in the event that a victim cannot be located and is unavailable for a court appearance.
- (e) Arranging for transportation for investigation-related matters, such as medical exams and court appearances.
- (f) Whether a crime should be reported and submitted for prosecution, even when a victim who is homeless indicates that he/she does not desire prosecution.
- (g) Whether the person may be an adult abuse victim and, if so, proceed in accordance with the Adult Abuse Policy.

427.4.2 INCLEMENT WEATHER

Officers encountering homeless persons who are without shelter during freezing weather should direct or transport the person to the nearest shelter, as appropriate (Exec. Order 151 (2016)).

427.5 MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

When mental health issues are evident, officers should consider referring the person to the appropriate mental health agency or providing the person with contact information for mental health assistance, as appropriate. In these circumstances, officers may provide transportation to a mental health facility for voluntary evaluation if it is requested or offered and accepted by the person, and approved by a supervisor. Officers should consider detaining the person under

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emergency admission when facts and circumstances reasonably indicate such a detention is warranted (see the Emergency Admissions Policy).

427.6 PERSONAL PROPERTY

The personal property of homeless persons must not be treated differently than the property of other members of the community. Officers should use reasonable care when handling, collecting and retaining the personal property of homeless persons and should not destroy or discard the personal property of a homeless person.

When a homeless person is arrested or otherwise removed from a public place, officers should make reasonable accommodations to permit the person to lawfully secure his/her personal property. Otherwise, it should be collected for safekeeping. If the arrestee has more personal property than can reasonably be collected and transported by the officer, a supervisor should be consulted. The property should be photographed and measures should be taken to remove or secure it. It will be the supervisor's responsibility to coordinate its removal and safekeeping.

Officers should not conduct or assist in clean-up operations of belongings that reasonably appear to be the property of homeless persons without the prior authorization of a supervisor or the homeless liaison. When practicable, requests by the public for clean-up of a homeless encampment should be referred to the liaison.

Officers who encounter unattended encampments, bedding or other personal property in public areas that reasonably appears to belong to a homeless person should not remove or destroy such property and should inform the liaison if such property appears to involve a trespass, is a blight to the community or is the subject of a complaint. It will be the responsibility of the liaison to address the matter in a timely fashion.

427.7 ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

Sometimes homeless encampments can have an impact on the ecology and natural resources of the community and may involve criminal offenses beyond mere littering. Officers are encouraged to notify other appropriate agencies or Village departments when a significant impact to the environment has or is likely to occur. A significant impact to the environment may warrant a crime report, investigation, supporting photographs and supervisor notification.